PUBLIC OPINION ON COMMUNITY ISSUES: SELECTED PAPERS

Edited By

Robert E. Crow and Mitchell E. Kosny

Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
Toronto, Ontario

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 3
October 1980

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: SURVEY RESEARCH 1

ATTITUDES OF SENIOR CITIZENS TOWARDS COMMUNITY SERVICES IN WARD NINE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO 4

A. INTRODUCTION 5

B. STUDY METHOD 6

C. FINDINGS 7

D. CONCLUSIONS 12

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO 14

A. INTRODUCTION 15

B. SURVEY RESEARCH FINDINGS 15

1. Characteristics of Respondents 16

2. Volunteers: Who and Why? 16

3. Remuneration for Volunteers 17

C. SUMMARY 18

D. RECOMMENDATIONS 19

FOOTNOTES 20

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION PRACTICES 21

A. INTRODUCTION 22

B. SURVEY RESEARCH FINDINGS 22

1. Characterics of Respondents 23

2. Attitude of Respondents 23

3. Summary 25

C. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 26

ATTITUDES OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO RESIDENTS TOWARD
THE TORONTO ISLAND COMMUNITY 29

A. INTRODUCTION 30

B. STUDY METHOD 31

C. FINDINGS 33

D. CONCLUSIONS 35

NOTE ON THE AUTHORS

PUBLIC OPINION ON COMMUNITY ISSUES: SELECTED PAPERS

INTRODUCTION: SURVEY RESEARCH

An important aspect of professional education which sets it apart from post-secondary education in other modes is a strong component of project-oriented work. In the Urban and Regional Planning Program at Ryerson, project experience is gained in workshops in each of the four years of the program and in lab/studio components of a number of core courses. Among the most valuable and enjoyable, from both a student and faculty point of view, is the lab work associated with URB 235, the final in a four-term sequence of required courses in planning analysis. This paper will present four outstanding pieces of student work which have been completed in the past two years. Each of these papers has a direct bearing on public policy in their respective areas of focus; indeed two have been introduced as evidence in significant public inquiries.

The setting of the student work is a laboratory in survey research. In addition to learning about survey methods, the students are required to perform research on a topic of their choice to the level of acceptable professional standards. The research is often performed for an actual client; voluntary agencies, community groups, politicians, and government agencies have been served in this course since its inception five years ago. In this way, the survey project work takes on a double significance. Not only is the work of academic benefit to the students involved, but it is also of direct benefit to the community at large.

The four projects selected for this Occasional Paper were chosen both for their quality and their potential interest. While survey research must of necessity confine its geographical area of study to manageable bounds, frequently there are insights to be gained which prove relevant far beyond the actual study area. Such is the case with the four papers in this volume.

The study on the attitudes of senior citizens towards public services was conducted in the Beaches area of Toronto, a community whose concentration of senior citizens is second only to Victoria, British Columbia. The study documents the responsiveness of seniors to a number of important services. The report on volunteer participation addresses the question of voluntarism generally and indicates that it is far from a vanishing aspect of urban life. The home energy conservation paper reveals a number of problems with the CHIP program and provides valuable insight into the response of households to rising energy costs. Finally, the paper on the attitudes of Metropolitan Toronto citizens toward the Toronto Island Community provides great insight into a local issue which has taken on national significance and points to a political, rather than city-suburb, confrontation.

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of our colleagues Jim Mars and Lawrence Altrows to the success of this course. Jim not only designed the curriculum which includes this project work, but also administers the course and provides advice and counselling to students in both substantive and methodological areas. Lawrence's addition to the survey research supervisory team two years ago has allowed further development of the service aspect of the project in the areas of housing and community planning.

Finally we wish to acknowledge the contribution of the more than two hundred students whose energy and enthusiasm have made survey research a dynamic component of planning education at Ryerson.

ATTITUDES OF SENIOR CITIZENS TOWARDS COMMUNITY SERVICES IN WARD NINE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO

BY

Brent Barnes
Shirley Crockett
Steve Newton
Stephen Orsini
Harold Povilaitis
Alan Thomson
Grant Thrasher

ATTITUDES OF SENIOR CITIZENS TOWARD COMMUNITY SERVICES IN WARD NINE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO

A. INTRODUCTION

With the proportion of persons in the 65 and over age category growing at unprecendented rates in nearly all areas of Canada, the need to address specifically the concerns of the elderly is becoming increasingly apparent. In many communities, senior citizens now constitute a sizeable fraction of the total population, and dealing with their special needs is now, and will continue to be, an important activity for planners, social workers, and governmental officials.

As in all planning activity, programming for senior citizens has been hindered by a lack of reliable information on the target population and their needs. This survey was prepared for Alderman Pat Sheppard of the City of Toronto to identify basic characteristics of the senior population in his ward and to identify usage patterns of presently available services. As the senior population in Ward 9, the Beaches area of Toronto is, in many ways, typical of elderly populations in other communities of the country it is hoped that the information presented here will be of use to many readers.

The survey was conducted in the winter of 1979 by seven Ryerson students. Results of this work have subsequently been presented to numerous public agencies with responsibility for specific aspects of service to senior citizens. In August 1980, the results of this study were introduced as evidence in the inquiry into the death of Lillian Hess, a tragedy which received national media attention.

B. STUDY METHOD

This study employed the drop-off, prearranged pickup method of administratio by members of the study team. Ward 9 was divided into seven postman's routes and systematic random sampling was employed to identify respondents. In practice this required each student to visit every tenth dwelling unit along his/her route looking initially for a senior citizen with whom to leave the questionnaire. Nearly 1800 dwelling units were approached by the students resulting in a sample of 268 senior citizens. Of this group, 187 or 69.8% responded to the questionnaire.

Two potential areas of non-response bias were identified by the study team. In the first case, the students were denied access to resident seniors in a housing project administered by Metropolitan Toronto. In the second case, the team felt that the delivery of the questionnaires in the winter months missed a number of more affluent elderly vacationing in warmer places. Consequently, the results may be somewhat biased in favour of lower-income respondents.

For the purpose of the study, a senior citizen was defined as a person 65 or older, or a retired person aged 60-64. While this definition is conventional it made direct comparison with census information somewhat difficult. To the extent that comparison could be made it was felt that the respondents were representative of the elderly population of the ward at least with respect to age and sex characteristics.

Analysis of the thirty-five question survey employed frequency analysis of responses to individual questions and contingency tables to assess association between responses to two questions. The chi-square test of association was employed in the latter case at the 5% level of significance. Mean levels of satisfaction were computed for the various services identified in the study.

C. FINDINGS

Among the most interesting findings of this study are those which relate to the characteristics of the respondents. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the respondents were between 60 and 69 years of age while 42% were in their seventies. Females accounted for approximately 55% of those responding.

Nearly half of all respondents were widowed, and a further 40% were married. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of those surveyed had been living in their present residence for more than 25 years and an additional 35% had lived in their present residence between 11 and 25 years. More than 75% of respondents lived in their own homes, and twenty-one percent (21%) lived in rented apartment accommodation of which only 10% was publically owned. Eighty-seven percent (87%) reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their present residence.

Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported 'housewife' as their last occupation before retirement. A further 33% were formerly employed in sales, service, or clerical occupations. Eighteen percent (18%) were retired labourers, and eleven percent (11%) were former professional, academic, or government employees.

Of the 154 senior citizens responding to the question concerning annual income, 41% reported incomes of less than $5,000, 41% reported incomes of $5,000 to $9,999, and 15% reported incomes of $10,000 to $14,999. Only 3% reported incomes of $15,000 or more.

Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents indicated that government pension was their principle source of income. Combined government/ company pension was cited by 27%. Thirteen percent (13%) gave savings and investment income as their major source while 8% listed company pension.

The respondent information allows a characterization of the senior citizen population in Ward 9 which is of importance for policy planning. A "typical" senior citizen in the Beaches is likely to be between the ages of 60 and 79 and either married or widowed. Seniors in this area tend to have lived in their present owner occupied housing unit for at least ten years and are satisfied with their living accommodations.

Given relatively low levels of income and long lengths of occupancy it can be inferred that this housing is likely owned outright and represents a significant, if not liquid, stock of wealth. Beaches seniors are primarily retired members of the "working class" who rely upon pension income, most likely through the Canada Pension Plan, to meet their basic economic needs.

The study also addressed senior citizen participation in, and satisfaction with ten categories of services available to them in the community. Of these, three may be looked upon as services which assist the senior citizen at his or her place of residence while the remaining services are of the type enjoyed outside the home. In general, the respondents were well-informed as the availabity of all services, although participation rates in the activities considered were somewhat lower than expected. In all cases, those indicating that they used available facilities/services were generally satisfied with their quality.

The Ward 9 area is relatively well-endowed with public parkland and nearly three quarters of the respondents indicated that they use the parks for passive recreation at least occasionally. Eighty percent (80%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the local parks as a setting for passive recreational activities. As might be expected far fewer seniors, 18%, reported involvement in active recreational pursuits: again the vast majority of users reported satisfaction with local facilities for active recreation.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of senior citizens responding reported that they use the normal public transit system for the majority of their travel. A further 28% use a private automobile as their principle mode of transportation. Seventy-nine percent (79%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with their major transportation means.

Fewer than 2% of respondents used a special Ward 9 "Shoppers Bus" although nearly three quarters of non-users were aware of its existence. Users were quite satisfied with the service which is oriented primarily towards seniors in housing projects in the ward.

Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents reported at least occasional use of public libraries in the ward. Among users, 84% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service and none were dissatisfied.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents reported use of local community centres with the great majority of users in the occasional category. Again, the seniors responding were quite satisfied with the programs available.

Less than 8% of those responding reported use of the Island Centre for Seniors on nearby Ward's Island. Generally the use is occasional and users find the Centre satisfactory.

About one third of seniors responding indicated at least occasional involvement in local church activities for the elderly persons which tend to compliment programs offered by community centres. Again, none of the participants in the church-sponsored programs were dissatisfied: nearly one half were satisfied.

Three home-based services were also identified and respondents were asked as to their use and satisfaction with a snow removal service provided by the City of Toronto, the nursing service offered by the City Health Department, and the Meals-on-Wheels program offered by a local voluntary agency.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of respondents reported use of the snow removal service with generally satisfactory response to the service. Among non-users, 90% were aware of the existence of the service but chose not to participate in the program.

A similar pattern of relatively low usage, but great awareness was found for both the public health nursing service and the Meals-on-Wheels program. Users, again, were satisfied with both services. Is, however, the awareness of the public health nursing service sufficient to deem the program successful? Even though clients know where to find help they often fail to use the service. With respect to the Meals-on-Wheels program, however, it is not clear whether participation in the program is limited by a lack of resources by the sponsoring agency or by a lack of demand on the part of the senior population.

D CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are enlightening as to the characteristics of the growing senior citizen population and their response to the services available to them. In the particular case of the Beaches it is immediately apparent that the basic given condition of the elderly is a desire to remain in their own homes and to avail themselves of services only to the extent that they themselves deem appropriate.

Relatively low levels of participation in activities ranging from community centres to Meals-on-Wheels indicate a strong desire on the part of seniors for independence and, as well, a strong element of pride. The study points to the fact, however, that seniors are willing to participate voluntarily in a number of activities, particularly where they perceive a benefit and no coercion and loss of dignity.

Low levels of participation indicate one of three important possibilities in service to the elderly. First, it is quite clear that many elderly are at any point in time perfectly capable of caring for themselves and neither want nor need outside assistance. Secondly, it is also possible that specific services are either under or inappropriately supplied due to a lack of resources or poor program design. Finally, it is also possible that seniors in need are not availing themselves of needed services for personal reasons.

From a social planning perspective the latter two possibilities are of most concern. Given the strong desire by seniors to remain in their own homes it is incumbent upon planners and community workers to design and support programs acceptable to seniors which enable them to live lives of dignity.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO

BY

Regan Hutcheson
Eva Ing
Gino Piticco
Selina Wong

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO

A. INTRODUCTION

Voluntary activity has, throughout Canadian history, been lauded, derided, and stereotyped,but always noticed.[1] It is, however, often considered as a fundamental human activity and therefore as varied as human interests, concerns, and aspirations. Realizing the importance of the voluntary sector,[2] this survey research was conducted during the Spring of 1980 to provide data on volunteer participation in Metropolitan Toronto which could be useful to all volunteer co-ordinating organizations.

B. SURVEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

The large geographical area of Metropolitan Toronto and the small size of the research group dictated the use of a telephone survey method to provide a sample of responses which were representative of the general population. Using a random digit dialing approach, 653 calls were placed.. Four hundred and fifty-one numbers were in service. Of this group, 181 individuals responded to the questionnaire giving a response rate of 40.2%.

1. Characteristics of Respondents

Over half of the respondents (56.4%) were female. Approximately 46% of those who did respond were in the 24-44 year old age category, and 53% were married. The majority of respondents (40%) had an annual income of over $20,000.

2. Volunteers: Who and Why?

Of those surveyed, 35% participated in volunteer work. Their reasons for volunteering fell into two main categories: (1) concern for the community - 32.8% and (2) 'personal interest' - 51.6%.

The most popular type of volunteer activity (33%) was community service work. Twenty-seven per cent of all respondents did political volunteering, 14% participated in school volunteering, and 9% did volunteer work in the church/synagogue activity category. Because the survey was conducted during the week following the federal election, it must be noted that the 27% response rate for volunteer work with political organizations is high, and may not be representative of the true rate of volunteer activity in that category.

Nearly one-half of all respondents (49%) who volunteer worked with the 6-12 year old age group. It was surprising to find that none of those who answered the survey worked with pre-school children, and less than 8% worked with the elderly. This last figure was particularly surprising as the proportion of elderly is increasing and one would assume that more volunteers would be involved with this sector of society.

Before the survey was carried out several results were anticipated. It was expected, for example, that volunteers would be involved 1-2 hours each week. Research indicated, however, that almost 40% participated as much as 3-5 hours during the week in their voluntary activity.

It was also anticipated that young adults with children, and parents with grown children would have the highest rate of participation in volunteer work. There was no significant relationship, in this case, but persons who were separated, divorced, or widowed were more likely to volunteer. Married persons represented the largest group (40%) of those who were not part of the voluntary sector.

Sixty-five percent of all persons who responded to the survey did not participate in any volunteer activity. Over half of those who did not volunteer cited a lack of time as a reason. Approximately 52% of those surveyed felt that volunteer work is not losing its popularity, while 29% indicated that the popularity of participating in volunteer work was declining.

3. Remuneration for Volunteers

The issue of some form of remuneration for volunteer work is controversial primarily because one objective of volunteering is to offer services at no cost. Respondents were divided on this question with 53% favouring some form of non-cash remuneration such as repayment for public transportation costs or free lunch.

Approximately one-half of respondents who do participate in the voluntary sector indicated that volunteer work is not losing its popularity, and that remuneration is not necessary (58.3%). Non-volunteers, however, were equally divided on the issue of remuneration for volunteering. Perhaps more people would volunteer if non-cash incentives were offered: it must be re-emphasized, however, that this is contrary to the basic purpose of volunteering.

C. SUMMARY

Survey research indicates that volunteer work is still a popular activity in Metropolitan Toronto with one in every three residents participating in some form of volunteer activity. Of those who do volunteer the largest proportion of people were widowed, divorced, or separated, not married or single persons as one might expect. The main reason people volunteer is for personal interest reasons and concern for the community. The most popular category for participation was community service work, followed by political work.

One of the most positive findings of the survey was that over half of those surveyed felt volunteer work was not losing its popularity, although one quarter of the respondents felt the opposite was true. The question of volunteers receiving some form of remuneration produced an even split in responses. It is interesting to note that almost none of the respondents were 'unsure' about this issue and many had strong personal opinions on the topic. Further, non-volunteers in favour of remuneration were greater in number than their volunteering counterparts. People who are not volunteering at present appear to want something for their time, and personal satisfaction no longer seems enough for many would-be volunteers.

In general, the research team believes that volunteer participation is still alive and well in Metropolitan Toronto, but signs do indicate that problems may lie ahead as the present number of volunteers retire from service. In response to this possibility, there are several recommendations which will assist in the longevity of volunteer work.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Volunteer organizations, community and ethnic newspapers, as well as churches and synagogues should advertise the availability of volunteer opportunities and promote the volunteer idea to all those who enquire.

- Organizations which do have the available funds and are in need of volunteers could provide some form of remuneration (not an exchange of cash for service) to encourage more citizens to volunteer.

- People should be encouraged to volunteer at a young age in order to instill a volunteer spirit in their life.

- Incentives could be provided for people to continue their volunteer work. This can be in the form of annual recognition dinners, certificates for outstanding work, more internal volunteer responsibility, and better media coverage of volunteer work and those special people who participate.

- All out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers should be reimbursed immediately, thus avoiding long administrative procedures.

FOOTNOTES

1. National Advisory Council of Canada, People in Action, (Ottawa: National Advisory Council of Canada, 1977), p. xiii

2. Throughout the survey, there are certain terms which require classification:

   - 'volunteer':

     - a person who freely donates his/her spare time to any organization or group.

   - 'remuneration':

     - it was suggested to respondents that the remuneration for volunteer work be in the form of free public transportation, a free lunch, etc. There was no mention of the actual exchange of money for the volunteer work.

   - ' volunteer categories':

     - 'church-synagogue volunteering' is any work done in association with a religion, i.e., church women's group, Sunday school classes.

     - 'school volunteering' is any volunteer work in association with an educational establishment, i.e., Home and School, Parent Advisory Board, Parent Library Assistants.

     - 'political volunteering' is any volunteer work with a political association, i.e., federal election, provincial or local office work.

     - 'community service volunteering' is any volunteer work which concerns itself with the general community, i.e., Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Red Cross, Big Brothers, Sport Activities, Community Centres.

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION PRACTICES

BY

Robert Creighton
Donna Davidson
Scott Galbraith
Julie Giles

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION PRACTICES

A. INTRODUCTION

Rising fuel costs, combined with a growing concern over the safety of nuclear power, have forced homeowners to pay greater attention to the alternative of energy conservation. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to sample the population of Metropolitan Toronto to determine their level of awareness and involvement in the practice of home energy conservation.

B. SURVEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

To obtain a representative sample of Metro Toronto residents, the random digit dialing method was used. Because the research dealt specifically with the issue of home energy conservation practices, approaches were confined to households. Businesses were excluded. During the course of the survey 558 calls were made. Of this group, 113 numbers were not in service and 20 were disqualified as they were business, resulting in a sample of 425 residents. One hundred and sixty residents responded to the questionnaire giving a response rate of 37.6%. It is important to note that the 1980 Energy Conservation Week was held in Toronto while the survey was being conducted, and this may have heightened the awareness of the public concerning the need to conserve energy.

1. Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents to the survey were representative of the Metro Toronto population. Approximately 52% were males, and over 40% of all respondents were in the 15-34 year age category with another 40% between the ages of 35-54. Forty-five percent of those who answered the survey were homeowners, while the remaining 55% were renters. In addition, nearly 69% of respondents lived in single family housing units while 29% were apartment dwellers.

2. Attitude of Respondents

A substantial proportion of respondents (45%) felt that not enough was being done to promote home energy conservation. Even though over 70% indicated that energy conservation practices in the home would save them a significant amount of money, only 26% were willing to become involved in a community energy conservation program if it were offered in their district.

Over one-third had not even heard of the Canadian Home Insulation Program (CHIP). Of those who were familiar with CHIP, approximately one in every five individuals had become involved with the program, and most of those (82%) felt that the program had benefitted their household. Two-thirds of the respondents gained familiarity with CHIP, and home energy conservation practices in general, through the media.

The survey results indicated a number of interesting trends. There was, for example, a strong relationship between owner occupied dwellings and the household's involvement with CHIP. It was also discovered that there was an equally strong relationship between the type of dwelling unit and involvement in the program. The majority of those who had used CHIP were owners of single family residences. No apartment dwellers or residents of 'other' types of dwelling units were involved. There may be two reasons for this: (1) residents of apartment units were more likely to be transient and therefore not be concerned with long term home energy costs; and (2) renters would be less inclined to invest time, effort, and money into property that was not their own.

There was also a relationship, although not a strong one, between the age of the respondent's dwelling unit and the household's involvement with CHIP. While a home must have been built before 1961 to qualify for government assistance, according to the specifications of the CHIP program, the majority of units involved with CHIP in this survey were units more than 26 years old. Many of these older homes were poorly insulated when they were originally constructed, and therefore would benefit from the program. It is therefore important to note that there is a large potential market for involvement in the program by households in dwellings over 20 years old who do not know or have not, as yet, become involved with the program.

Several additional relationships are worth noting. Forty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that they had knowledge of the CHIP program, and could save home energy costs. Over 20% reported, however, that they could have saved a significant amount of money, but were not aware of the program. This sector of the population represents both a potential market for CHIP and an area of emphasis for future educational efforts.

4. Summary

The survey illustrates that in Metropolitan Toronto the awareness of residents towards energy conservation practices in the home is certainly not complete. Though it must be recognized that only a few years ago this awareness would probably have been non-existant and many advances have since been made, there is still considerable room for improvement. The federally-sponsored CHIP program appears to have had success in Metropolitan Toronto, but it needs to be expanded.

The local level appears to offer the greatest opportunities for informing, educating and assisting the public in home energy conservation, and yet it remains the level which has been most neglected. Politicians, community groups and organizations do have the opportunity to involve the citizens directly in energy conservation, but the survey indicates that little has been done so far, and most people would be reluctant to become involved in a program even if it was offered.

C. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over 71% of respondents reported that they could save a significant amount of money through energy conservation. Yet with respect to the question of whether enough is being done to promote home energy conservation, 47% felt that there is not while 55% indicated either that enough was being done or didn't care.

This suggests that a larger percentage of the population, though they support energy conservation in theory, are not concerned about the further promotion of conservation. This is supported by the findings that, by sex, only one-half as many women as men felt that more should be done to promote conservation in the home. If only those who are facing the direct costs of energy increases (traditionally male household heads) are concerned about the further development of conservation, then it is indicative of the fact that a stronger emphasis must be placed on creating a desire for energy conservation among the entire population.

- The promotion of home energy conservation should be designed to reach a wider group than at present.

It further becomes obvious that greater responsibilities should fall on institutions that promote energy conservation. In Metropolitan Toronto, only 25% of the respondents were aware of any community group that advocated energy conservation practices, and of those who were aware, the City of Toronto, York, and East York had the highest percentage. This illustrates that there is a lack of balance in informing Metro residents by the local level of government, local utility, or local community groups.

This leads to a second recommendation:

- The Council of Metropolitan Toronto, in conjunction with all cities and boroughs within Metro boundaries, should seek to provide a better system of public information and education across both inner city areas and suburbs so that all Metro residents are exposed to methods of energy conservation in the home.

The fact that 66% of the respondents identified the media as their major source of information regarding energy conservation indicates that Ontario Hydro's program (which reminds people that they should turn down their thermostats, fix leaking faucets, and "if we all save a little we'll end up saving a lot") is widely received. Less than one-quarter of the respondents, however, felt that they received information from government publications and utilities. Further, while information on conservation was received, the messages did not include any direct incentive programs to promote conservation. Based on this response, therefore, a third recommendation is as follows:

- Both the Provincial government and utility companies should place more emphasis on the use of "incentive" advertising and develop a program of incentives to conserve energy. This should be promoted through the media.

One of the most important influences, as the results of the survey show, was the respondent's knowledge and involvement in the federal Canadian Home Insulation Program. Approximately 62% of the respondents were familiar with the program and 18 percent indicated that they had become involved. This response, in combination with several additional responses illustrates that there is still a large percentage of people who have not yet heard of CHIP (and, therefore, do not practice its effectiveness). Of those who had been involved in the program, however, 89% were owners of homes while only 11% rented their homes.

Since homes must have been built before 1961 to qualify for CHIP many people are left out. In addition, greater incentives should be put forth to induce apartment owners and renters to participate in the program:

- The federal government should expand the CHIP program to include newer homes and apartment units that may be under-insulated. There should also be an effort to make more people aware of CHIP by creating greater accessibility and efficiency in the system as well as increasing advertising.

ATTITUDES OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO RESIDENTS TOWARD THE TORONTO ISLAND COMMUNITY

BY

Joe Balkovec
Heather Knowles
Glenn Scheels
Andy Raithby
Martha Watt

ATTITUDES OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO RESIDENTS TOWARD THE TORONTO ISLAND COMMUNITY

A. INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty-five years the presence of a residential community on the Toronto Islands has been a major political issue. First settled more than one hundred years ago, the Island community has diminished in size from its peak of 1500 households to its present 250 units. Since the formation of Metropolitan Toronto, which resulted in the transfer of land ownership of the Islands to the Metropolitan Toronto Parks Department, the community has been under the threat of total elimination to make way for expanded parkland.

The fate of the remaining households on Wards and Algonquin Islands is in jeopardy. A six-month stay of eviction was granted in January, 1979 to allow officials of the City of Toronto, Metropolitan Toronto, and the Province of Ontario to attempt to resolve the issue. A compromise offered by the Provincial Minister of Housing, the Hon. Tom Wells, which would have allowed existing residents to remain in their homes until they either moved or died was unacceptable to both the Islanders and the City of Toronto. At the time of this writing, a commission of inquiry headed by lawyer Barry Swadron is considering evidence in an effort to finally resolve the fate of the Island Community.

While political opinions on this issue have been seen as essentially a conflict between City of Toronto and suburban politicians on the Metropolitan Toronto Council, public opinion has never been directly addressed in an acceptable form. In an effort to clarify the opinions of actual citizens, five Ryerson students undertook a telephone survey

of Metropolitan Toronto Residents during the first two weeks of March, 1979. The results of this survey will be presented to the commission of inquiry in October, 1980.

B. STUDY METHOD

The study was conducted as a public opinion survey of a sample of residents of Metropolitan Toronto. The survey was delivered by telephone with sampling by the technique of random digit dialing. As employed in this case, ten four-digit random numbers appended to each of the 172 three digit telephone exchanges in Metro Toronto were dialed between the hours of 7 and 9 P.M. from March 5 to March 14,1979. The 609 numbers found to be in service constituted the sample for the purposes of this study.

In a strictly random sample, every member of the study population has an equal probability of being chosen a member of the sample. Random digit dialing is a practical method of closely approximating a true random sample with the following qualifications:

1. Persons without telephones are excluded from any sample.
2. Persons in large households have a lower probability of being included in the sample and conversely.
3. Persons who both live and work in the study area have a higher probability of being selected; however, by conducting the survey after business hours this source of bias is minimized.

Despite these drawbacks, random digit dialing is a widely used technique because it is the best practical method to approach a random sample of the general population.

Seven questions were asked of each respondent. Three were designed to give a limited amount of information about the respondent, namely his/her age, place of residence, and length of residence in Metropolitan Toronto.

The remaining questions pertained to the respondent's use of and attitude toward the future of the Toronto Islands. Respondents were asked whether they were aware that the island community was being considered for demolition to make way for more parkland, whether they supported such a move, how often they had visited the islands in the past year, and whether the islands should remain under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Toronto or be returned to the City of Toronto.

In any form of survey research, a certain proportion of the sample will refuse to respond to the questionnaire. This presents a problem if non-respondents share a common characteristic. Unfortunately, in a telephone survey, the only characteristic which can be examined is the individual's three digit exchange. In this study, no pattern was discernible among the 256 members of the sample who refused to answer the questionnaire. Since the callers spoke only English, a few members of the sample were unable to respond.

Analysis of the individual response relied on simple frequency distributions for answers to individual questions and two-way contingency tables for association of responses on two questions. The chi-square test was employed at the 5% level of significance to test the strength of association between variables.

C. FINDINGS

The 314 respondents to the survey were distributed among the six member-municipalities of Metropolitan Toronto in approximate proportion to their respective populations. As an effort was made by the students to interview adults, 92% of respondents were eighteen years of age or older. Eighty-five percent had lived in Metropolitan Toronto for five or more years; nearly two thirds had resided in Metropolitan Toronto for ten or more years.

Forty-eight percent of respondents reported that they had visited the Islands at least once in the previous twelve months. Only five percent indicated that they had visited the Islands on more than five occasions; twenty-three percent reported 2 to 4 visits in the past year.

The issue of the Island community was relatively well known among the respondents as fully 87% of those surveyed were aware of Metropolitan Toronto's intentions to remove the community in the interest of providing additional park space. This level of awareness was not related to the respondents' places or length or residence: Younger members of the sample, however, were significantly less aware of the issue than their older counterparts.

Support for the retention of the Island community was found to be wide -spread. Overall, 78% of respondents felt that the community should continue to exist. Only 6% felt that the community should

be removed in favour of additional parkland. Sixteen percent registered no opinion on the issue.

Surprisingly, the level of support for the retention of the community did not vary significantly among respondents by place of residence. In fact, the lowest level of support for the Islanders came from residents of North York who supported the retention of the community by more than 7 to 1. Further, support was widespread among all age groups in the sample.

Perhaps the most telling finding of the survey, however, was that respondents who use the Islands support the retention of the community more strongly than those who do not. Fully 84% of those respondents who had visited the Islands at least once in the past year supported retention of the Island community while only 5% favoured removal of the Island homes.

One contention issue concerned which level of government -- the City of Toronto or Metro Toronto -- retained jurisdiction over the future of the Island community. While nearly half of the respondents were indifferent, the balance were evenly split between City and Metro jurisdiction.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The Toronto Island Community has been characterized as an issue which pits citizens of Metropolitan Toronto's suburban municipalities against those of the City of Toronto. Indeed, this viewpoint has been expressed repeatedly in media coverage of the issue, in Metropolitan Toronto Council, and in other public forums. The opinions of the respondents to this survey, a representative cross-section of persons from all areas of Metro, refute this characterization dramatically. It is clear that only a tiny minority of Metro residents feel that it is desirable to remove the Island community to make way for expanded parkland. Of those residents who actually use the Islands, only one in twenty favours demolition of the Island homes.

The Island community issue appears, therefore, as a strictly political one. A strong Metro Torotno Department in alliance with suburban political representatives to Metro Council continues to press for removal of the community despite overwhelming <u>public</u> opinion against their actions. Were the suburban politicians to listen to their constituents there would be no issue at all.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert E. Crow is a faculty member in the Urban and Regional Planning Department at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute with teaching and research interests in social, and energy planning. He holds masters' degrees in economics from the University of Toronto, and in regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is also a Trustee of the United Way of Greater Toronto. Mitchell Kosny teaches in Ryerson's Urban and Regional Planning Department, and holds a Ph.D. in Regional Planning and Resource Development from the University of Waterloo. Dr. Kosny acts as an Editor of the Occasional Paper Series, and participates in the community as a Member of the Board of Directors of Woodgreen Community Centre in Toronto.

Additional copies of this paper are available, at no charge from:

Editor, Occasional Paper Series
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
50 Gould Street
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1E8